

Child and Family Services Update

December 9, 2004

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Director's Message

Happy Holidays!

Many of us are celebrating various holidays during this time of year. Some of you will be traveling and others spending some much-needed extra time at home. Whatever the celebration and wherever you go, please know that the work you do all year long is vital to the strengthening of our society. As your director, I am so grateful for all that you do. You may not always hear me, but I praise your work constantly. You have my sincere respect, gratitude, and admiration. There are times when the requests that I have to pass along may not convey the impression that I understand the pressures and the priorities you are dealing with daily, but please know that I do! I worry about this constantly, and try to minimize additional pressures whenever it is possible to do so.

My experience in this work reminds me that this time of year becomes even more stressful as we worry about the children, adults, and families who we know are struggling, while others are celebrating. You may also worry that your holidays may end up in a crisis due to the potential disruption of those you are serving. My heart goes out to you for your dedication and the sacrifices you and your families and your friends make because you are so committed to doing this very important and difficult work. This time each year, my thoughts turn toward many of those that I have worked with over the years who needed extra help during the holidays. I know that your support strengthens them and encourages them to face their difficult times. I thank you for joining a profession that has such an extreme positive impact on the lives of so many people. I wish you all a safe and joyful holiday season.

--Richard

Protection

The Sense Of Being Safe

By Richard Anderson, Director of Child and Family Services

A valuable question to ask children and adults with whom we work is, "Do you feel safe?" It can be asked in many ways and needs to be asked often. This one question can guide a lot of the assessment, planning, and interventions that we provide for children and families. There are many other questions to be asked, but this one is fundamental. One of the most caring and productive engaging activities we can do is to ask this question.

Most often, our work is providing safety in relationships. Surely there are times when the environment needs to be changed to provide safety, but **someone** has to make this happen and then keep the environment safe. More often it is the nature of the relationship that causes the need for our interventions to provide a safe place.

"Among the greatest of blessings in life is to be safe with someone – someone without evil intent, someone who wouldn't violate a trust, who wouldn't take advantage of innocence or ignorance; someone who isn't planning in his heart to compromise principles...We may have all else in life, but if we can't count on character, on integrity, if we haven't the sense of being safe, we have little that matters very much."

(Quoted from Richard L. Evans)

Over the past many years I have thought a lot about the idea of true safety. The thought that I might help to provide such a gift for those I work with has been a motivating factor for staying in such a demanding profession. For some, safety may be assured by the absence of harm or danger. Yet, for others this may involve being surrounded by those that are known and trusted. Both are important to our responsibilities in the work of child welfare and domestic violence services. Fear of the loss of safety or the actual loss of safety can lead to debilitating

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outcomes, while obtaining safety by or for a child, an adult, or a family can be motivating and strengthening. I think this may be one of the reasons why those that choose to do the work of child welfare and domestic violence services stay in this field. Providing safety from abuse, neglect, abandonment, or exploitation is a most worthy endeavor. It is a powerful question-- "Do you feel safe?"

Development

Ages And Stages

By Jonathan Houser, Program Area Trainer

"Ages and Stages" is a questionnaire, which is completed with a parent or caregiver to create a screening for developmental milestones in children of different ages. There is a different questionnaire for each of 19 different ages from four months to 66 months. The questionnaires are considered to be good indicators of a child's development. The areas addressed are communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving, personal-social, and overall.

Last month we took a look at the four-month questionnaire. Here is a look at some of the 12-month questions.

The 12-month questionnaire includes the following:

- Communication: At 12 months, a baby may be able to tell you they want something by pointing to it, follow simple commands, and use a word in addition to "Mama" and "Dada."
- Gross Motor: At 12 months, a baby may be able to lower themselves under control while holding onto furniture, walk along furniture while holding with one hand, and stand in the middle of the floor by themselves.
- Fine Motor: At 12 months, a baby may be able to pick up a string with their first finger and thumb, pick up a crumb or Cheerio with the tips of their finger, and throw a small ball with a forward arm motion.
- Problem Solving: At 12 months, a baby may be able to clap toys together while holding them in each hand, find a toy after it has been hidden under a cloth, and copy the act of scribbling.
- Personal-Social: At 12 months, a baby may be able to finish putting their arm through a sleeve once it is started, lift their foot for a shoe or sock, and play with a doll or stuffed animal by hugging it.
- Overall: At 12 months, does the baby hear well, stand flat-footed most of the time, and use both hands equally well?

Permanency

Preface For "Changing A Mindset"

Patti VanWagoner, Deputy Director

The following article was shared with me in the Housing task group that has been chartered for the Transition to Adult Living Initiative. In November 2003, Governor Walker announced the Transition to Adult Living Implementation Team with chartered workgroups to assist in developing a support network to build support for our youth as they leave foster care. That team consists of a public/private partnership that has worked hard this past year to work on the goals that came from holding a Youth Summit with youth in the Independent Living Program and following up with an Adult Summit to set specific goals. These five goals target the areas for us to work on with youth while they are in our care to help them become successful adults.

- Goal 1: A Positive Sense of Self
- Goal 2: Supportive and Enduring Relationships

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- Goal 3: Education Attainment and Stable Employment
- Goal 4: Health Care Access (Physical and Mental Health)
- Goal 5: Safe, Stable, Affordable Housing

While the task groups have been identifying system changes and strategies that are bringing about greater partnerships and resources to support youth as they exit care, we need to look internally at what we are doing with the youth while they are in our care to build the internal assets they need to access and use the resources available to them. Please read this article knowing that in the past we haven't had the focus on the Independent Living Program or resources needed to make the impact we have wanted to with youth who exit foster care to adulthood. It's our time to make a difference in how we serve this population by taking our Practice Model Principles and Skills and identifying the ways we can build upon the model to serve this population of youth.

Changing of a Mind Set

This is an appeal to caseworkers from community partners who care about the youth who are aging out of foster care.

As members of the Housing task group for the Transition to Adult Living Initiative we appeal to the caseworkers who are working with the youth in DCFS custody to recognize the need to change the attitude that some of you have toward the youth in care and to demonstrate your understanding of adolescent development. We are concerned about some Independent Living Workers in some areas and the culture of DCFS as it pertains to those youth in care receiving services.

Today's Realities:

Four million 18 year olds live in America and of these 18-year-olds, only 5 -10% live on their own. The percentages for the 19 to 24-year-old population increase minimally with each birthday. Data indicates that 95 percent of Americans are 25 years or older before living totally self-sufficiently.

There is nothing magic about the year 18. There are best practices available in the industry but are not generally implemented. Educational attainment has been identified as the number one indicator of employability and obtaining a living wage in America. Self-esteem is enhanced by learning essential life skills and by practicing learned skills in the work place. Sustainable relationships help us develop a support network of caring people. Living on our own depends on having a safe, affordable, and quality living situation. It is common knowledge that to live self-sufficiently, we must become interdependent. These concepts are widely acknowledged, intellectually as well as experientially. Yet, we still often fail to help emancipate these youth successfully into adulthood.

The population of 18-year-old foster care youth is just as needy and confused and stuck between childhood and adulthood as any other average 18-year-old, except for one thing. These young people, more often than not have nowhere to turn. No parents or home to return to, no family to fall back on. So, they turn to the only support that they currently have - the system and their worker.

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Solutions:

The time has come that the DCFS realizes and accepts that working with youth 16 and older to prepare them to exit foster care as young adults through Independent Living Program is a specialty area and demands training and expectations for workers that support this specialty. It has been the experience of those working both inside and outside of the system that there are shortages of workers with proactive, realistic visions of what can and should be expected of these youth in transition.

It is a given that youth will not follow through on occasion. They will make people angry with their poor decisions and lack of follow through. These characteristics are not exclusive to youth in custody. All youth in transition have these testing behaviors, it is age appropriate. Having a punitive mindset, threatening youth with termination from care for not following through or making acceptable choices is not productive. Assistance should be based on established policy not on individual sets of values professed by individual workers. DCFS needs to create a consistent framework across the state. Independent Living Services vary from region to region. It is difficult to ensure that all youth are receiving the quality of service to which they are entitled. Consistent opportunities should be offered to all youth leaving the system,

In order to fully implement the recommendations of the Governors Task Force on Transition to Adulthood, the issues of system culture changes must be addressed. Training workers on the differences and challenges of working with this age group must be emphasized.

In summary, workers need to recognize that it is entirely acceptable to assist any youth 18 years old or older. We understand that in the past there has been a lack of resources and giving up on those 18 year olds who weren't compliant meant terminating custody anyway. With the Governors Initiative there is now attention being paid to the Independent living program that has not been there before. Please recognize that now is the time for DCFS to build the internal structure needed to establish an improved process for transitioning youth out of foster care while those of us in the community join with you to provide resources and support to help them become successful adults.

The Paradox:

"For emancipating foster teens and the courageous care givers who support them; this is our Vietnam. (Not to draw direct comparisons to the heroes of that war, but to put it into a social context which all Americans are so aware.) We are willing to work in the streets of our largest cities and in the rolling hills of our most rural landscapes, but we need unfettered support. We need the opportunity to win. But as long as we are trying to prepare foster teens to live on their own at eighteen, we will lose. We may win some battles, but we are guaranteed to lose the war. Because 18 year-olds do not live on their own in America." - Daniel J. Brannen, Kids @ Home, Inc.

Cultural Responsiveness

The Holidays In Foster Care

By Reba Nissen, Mentor Program Coordinator; and Karen Hill, Resource Family Consultant

Happy Holidays Everyone! I was recently visiting Western Region and had a chance to visit with Karen Hill, Resource Family Consultant. Karen shared with me that she had created a

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brochure for the foster parents with whom she works to help raise their awareness of the emotions and behaviors foster children may exhibit during the holidays. The brochure also provides some helpful suggestions for meeting children's needs and self-care for foster parents.

Always looking for ways that we can share ideas and learn from each other, I asked Karen if she would mind sharing this innovative and helpful brochure with Resource Family Consultants and Permanency/Out-of-Home workers statewide.

The brochure was created by Karen to meet a potential gap in service to families, "I was going to be on medical leave for an extended period of time and, knowing that the holiday season tends to create emotional outbursts with the children we work with, I wanted to make sure our providers were prepared." The brochure has since paved the way for Karen to have thoughtful and creative conversations with foster parents who are unsure about how to survive the holidays with as little trauma as possible, for the children they care for and themselves!

Attached is the brochure entitled, "[The Holiday In Foster Care](#)." Thank you Karen Hill and Western Region for sharing this with the rest of us!

Partnership

Specifying Attorney Privileged Communications in SAFE

By Kim Pinnegar, Information Analyst

As of July 1, 2004, Guardians ad Litem (GALs) were granted access to SAFE by the State Legislature. Access to cases by a GAL prior to July 1, 2004 will continue to be through their requesting a copy of the case as in the past. SAFE was updated to allow workers to identify activity logs that are considered "client-attorney privileged data." GALs will not have access to these logs.

- You as a caseworker (or anyone else creating an activity log entry) must designate those Activities, dated after 01 July 2004, which are considered to be attorney privileged communications.
- SAFE was programmed to eliminate access by staff of the Guardian ad Litem's Office to those activities marked "client/attorney privileged information."

When a privileged communication occurs between an Assistant Attorney General and Child and Family Services staff regarding a client or case, the staff should record that communication in the Activity Record for the case and mark that entry as being 'Atty Priv.'

In an e-mail dated June 16, 2004 to Adam Trupp, Legislative, Policy and Planning Administrator for Child and Family Services, Mark May, Division Chief, Child Protection Division of the Attorney General's office provided the following definition of privileged communication:

At a minimum, the communication must be between an attorney and the attorney's client. According to Utah Evidence Law by Edward Kimball and Ronald Boyce: The privileges for communications require that the client intends them to be confidential and that they be made in private and relate to legal services. The presence of an unnecessary person (someone other than a DCFS employee) during the conversation results in the inapplicability of the privilege.

A new **Atty Priv (II)** command button has been added to each Activity entry, just below the date, as indicated in the mock-up by the red arrow. When the **Atty Priv (II)** command button is

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selected the appearance of the button will immediately change to **Atty Priv (Y)** as indicated, reflecting that the activity will now be restricted from GAL view.

Date	Time	Duration	Status	Activity Type	Worker
24DEC03	00:00	1 Minutes	Final	Recording	Whiting, Wendy
Atty Priv (N) Policies: Wendy Whiting was assigned as a Caseworker Assistant					
02MAR04	10:45	40 Minutes	Final	Collateral Staffing	Diviney, Charles
Atty Priv (Y) Policies: Staffed case with the AG and we talked about a lot of secret stuff that can't be shared with the GAL					

Activity entries may be marked or unmarked as 'Atty Priv' by the worker listed on the Activity, the primary caseworker for the case, or their supervisor, at any time whether the case is opened or closed.

Draft activities are viewable only by the worker entering the activity and the worker's supervisor. After the activity is changed to final, any person with access to safe will be able to view the activity with the exception of 'Atty Priv.' activities as explained above.

Organizational Competence

CPS And Home-Based Workers: What You Do And Document On Your Cases NOW Counts For The Next Case Process Review!

By Aude Bermond-Hamlet, Office of Services Review

At this point the review period for the next Case Process Review (CPR) on CPS cases and home-based cases is set to go from September 1st to November 31, 2004.

The Office of Services review conducted a study this summer to review all of the "No" and "Partial" answers of the last CPR review. The main finding is that **more than half of the required actions had been completed by the workers, but not documented sufficiently or at all.** So, the good news is: workers are actually doing what they should (at least a good amount of it), but not documenting well enough. The bad news is: the insufficient documentation keeps Child and Family Services under Federal court supervision; this costs the state a lot of money and is bad for the agency's image.

The Federal judge will base her decision to end or continue court oversight based on the next CPR results; what you do now is important: Your cases could be selected for the CPR! Here are four things you can remember to do and document:

CPS:

- Shelter Visits: Go back through your logs and make sure that you clearly document whether you visited the child in shelter within 48 hours of removal from home and weekly thereafter. The log entry must include entering the shelter ("I picked up Johnny

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at the shelter” doesn’t count) and talking to the shelter staff or child about the child’s adjustment. If the visit was done by the on-call worker or ongoing worker, make sure this is documented in your CPS file as well. Also, when you place the child make sure you enter in your logs that you gave the essential information about the child’s safety and well-being to the shelter care provider (such as information about current illness, prescription medications, aggressive or other behavioral concerns, etc.).

- **Interview the child’s natural parent(s):** this means BOTH parents. If one of the parent’s whereabouts are unknown, then document this, we’ll give you credit. Our study revealed that most of the “Partials” are due to workers forgetting to document the reasons they didn’t talk to the second parent. Also, make sure to document that you discussed each allegation with the parents. Remember to document interviewing a third party on each CPS case. Talking to the referent counts as a third party, or anyone who had direct association with the child or is otherwise knowledgeable about the case. Reviewing a police or medical report can also count, if it is documented.

Home-Based Cases:

- Make sure to document that you involved the family in the development of the plan: This includes the natural parent(s)/guardian (both, unless there are clearly documented reasons); the stepparent, if appropriate; and the child (age five years and older). If someone cannot attend the child and family team meeting, make sure to obtain their input and document that. Input from family members must be obtained within the 45 days before the initial plan is finalized. For all following plans the input must be obtained sometime in the 30 days before the plan is finalized in order for it to count. Consider this: we’re not at the meeting. So, we don’t know whether you developed the plan or grilled Smores. You need to let us know by stating who gave what input.
- **Child and Family Plans:** They are due within 45 days and then every six months. But 45 days of what? Your practice guideline states: the start date will be no later than the date the court orders home-based services, the date prior services close, or the date the services are assigned, whichever comes first. So, do you know now when your plan is due? Try to set up a family team meeting in the first couple of weeks in order to have enough time to develop the plan. Also, remember that in order to be considered complete the plan needs to have a current Functional Assessment and no gaps between the old and the new plan. It’s when you click that “Finalize” button on SAFE that the plan is completed.

If you have any questions, call the Office of Services Review at (801) 538-4277, or email us at bmcgarry@utah.gov. For more information, go to our website at: www.hsosr.utah.gov.

Professional Competence

“Heroes For Families” Award

By Karen Sitterud, Child and Family Services Citizen Board Chairperson

The Child and Family Services Citizen Board along with local legislators recognized several workers from the Western Region at a recent Board meeting. They received the “Heroes For Families” award. Brent Platt, Western Region Director, made the following comments about the honorees:

- **Janice Warner** is a Resource Family Consultant. Janice helped initiate a working agreement between Western Region and Salt Lake Valley to share foster homes for children who haven’t found a foster home in the Salt Lake area.
- **Suzanne Callister** is a Resource Family Consultant who works directly with the Salt Lake children that are placed in Western Region.

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- **Casey Christopherson** is the Drug Court Supervisor. Casey received a Supervisor of the Year award at a recent conference. He is a great advocate with the judges and courts in focusing on the needs of the families and children receiving the services needed. He is also a great support for his workers.
- **Cathy Burchard** is a foster care worker. She has done a fantastic job providing for the families and children she works with. Cathy has a very caring approach when dealing directly with families.
- **Amanda Lund** is a CPS and in-home worker in Heber City. Amanda does a great job working with families in Wasatch and Summit Counties. Her goal is always to help families stay together whenever possible. When a child is placed out of the home, her goal is to get them back home as soon as possible when appropriate.

The Heroes for Families award is given to workers who have gone above and beyond the call of duty when working with families and children. These people are just a small percentage of men and women who have dedicated their lives to helping families and children in crises. Workers in the Child Welfare System are often called upon to render help to families and never receive thanks for doing so. It is important for people in the state of Utah to realize that it takes dedication, long hours, and a love of helping others to work with families that are often unable to help themselves.

Update And Reminders On Supervisor Reports

By Navina Forsythe

- The **r_hb_pit_childfamilyteammtg** report programming of the numbers by worker has been fixed.
- The guest logins have now been disabled.
- The website for the Data Warehouse, if you want to bookmark it in your Internet explorer, is: <http://www.hsdw.state.ut.us/>.
- If you still need to sign up for access to the Data Warehouse, complete the form at the following website, have your supervisor sign it, and send it to Navina Forsythe at the state office to sign: <http://www.hsdw.state.ut.us/AccessFormEmployee.htm>.
- If you have forgotten your login and password to the Data Warehouse, please email Dennis Allred.
- Remember that your login to the executables is the same as your SAFE login and password.
- If you need to know your supervisor ID email, Navina Forsythe or one of the other Information Analysts from the list you were given.

If you desire any other reports be added to the executables, please email Navina Forsythe.